

# ***The Suburbs of Hell***

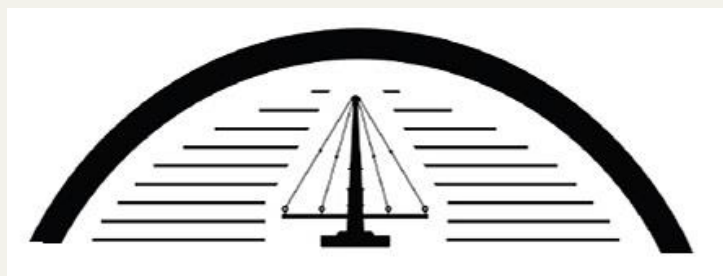
First Published - Secker & Warburg (London), Heinemann  
(Australia) 1984.

Security is a fragile thing, as the people of the little medieval town of Old Tornwich soon find out. Against a relatively peaceful background, a series of apparently senseless, motiveless murders take place. The murders seem to be the work of a lunatic: the Tornwich Monster as the local papers call him. An epidemic of violence without apparent cause slices open the texture of Tornwich life, and sets it unravelling. Suspicion itself turns out to be a fatal infection.

Afterword by Michelle de Krester:

*His eyes are on the one eye of the rifle. His mouth splits open his brown beard. He throws up a hand, palm outward, in an unwilling, futile gesture toward of death.*

A killer is hounding the seaside town of Old Tornwich. Residents are gripped with fear and suspicion, and the finger of blame is pointed in all directions. But the bodies keep falling and the crimes remain unsolved, the culprit at large. No mere whodunit, *The Suburbs of Hell* - its story inspired by a real-life serial killer - is a profoundly disturbing psychological drama with a devastating conclusion, the final work of one of Australia's greatest writers.



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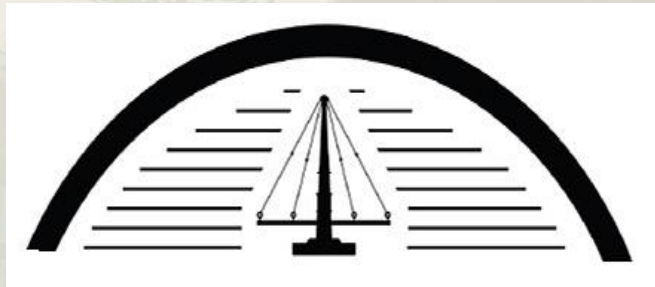
In the quiet seafaring town of Tornwich, little goes unnoticed. Neighbourhood gossip spreads like wildfire, leaving few skeletons in closets. But late one night a man is shot dead in his home. A short time later another body is discovered.

The town is gripped by fear. The finger of blame is pointed in all directions. False accusations and outlandish charges leave a trail of shattered relationships in their wake-and still the crimes remain unsolved, and the culprit at large.

Far more than a murder mystery, *The Suburbs of Hell* is a profoundly disturbing psychological drama with a devastating conclusion. Inspired by the Nedlands Monster, a serial killer who terrorized Perth in the 1960s, *The Suburbs of Hell* is an atmospheric thriller from one of Australia's most significant writers.

'Both a traditional murder mystery and a meditation on the random depredations of death' *Australian Book Review*

Source: <http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9781925240313/suburbs-hell-text-classics>



Abridged Review by Geordie Williamson

(Chief Literary Reviewer of the Australian Newspaper)

Randolph Stow never relinquished Australia as a subject: how could he do so, when conscious exile from his birthplace was the central fact of his later life? Even at the end of his career as a novelist, with the publication of 1984's *The Suburbs of Hell*, Stow was still smuggling antipodean experience into his pages. This final work saw him translate the chilling efforts of Perth serial killer Eric Edgar Cooke, "the Nedlands Monster", to a fictionalized version of his hometown of Harwich.

As Michelle de Kretser points out in a superbly rendered and intensely admiring afterword, all that was there at the beginning of the author's career remains at its conclusion, only clarified: a wise, sharp, wounded intelligence, a mastery of the detail of character and place, and a melancholy grasp of the awful exigencies of human existence. She writes, "In Stow, the divergent impulses of scientist and shaman converge (he was, after all a poet: by definition at odds with common sense).

Only the literary novel, she concludes, "a lively and elastic thing, can accommodate bizarre shackling's of this sort". In the case of *The Suburbs of Hell*, she suggests, Stow grafts something visionary onto the calcified form of the whodunit.

Source:

<http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2015/november/1446296400/geordie-williamson/conscious-exile>

